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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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THESIS ABSTRACT

Resurrection of the Prehistoric Dead: The personal histories of sixteen ancient inhabitants of Eastern Palliser Bay. A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Anthropology, University of Otago, 1975 by D.G. Sutton.
375 pp, 39 Tables, 9 Figures, 13 Appendices and Bibliography of Works Cited.

The potential of human remains as a source of information about the prehistoric period is underestimated in New Zealand and elsewhere. The practice of 'lumping' samples of unprovenanced remains together for comparative studies should be reconsidered and an alternative approach, based on the detailed analysis of small provenanced samples, adopted.

Sophisticated techniques of analysis have been developed in physical anthropology and the medical sciences. These can be applied to prehistoric material. In this way the medical and social life histories of a number of prehistoric people from Eastern Palliser Bay are reconstructed. This information is then formed into a statement of longevity, health and fertility in the remote past.

The results indicate that; infant mortality was high (at approximately 25%), both sexes pursued a rigorous life-style, dental loss and spinal degeneration were the main problems of old age, and adults died on average at about 40 years of age. Additional studies of this sort would allow comparison of these 'conditions of life' with those pertaining to other prehistoric communities.

It is hoped that one publication dealing with the demographic properties of the Palliser Bay people will result. The thesis is held in libraries at the University of Otago and the University of Auckland, where it may be consulted.